



# Acquisition Program Management Challenges in Afghanistan

## Part 1: Requirements Generation

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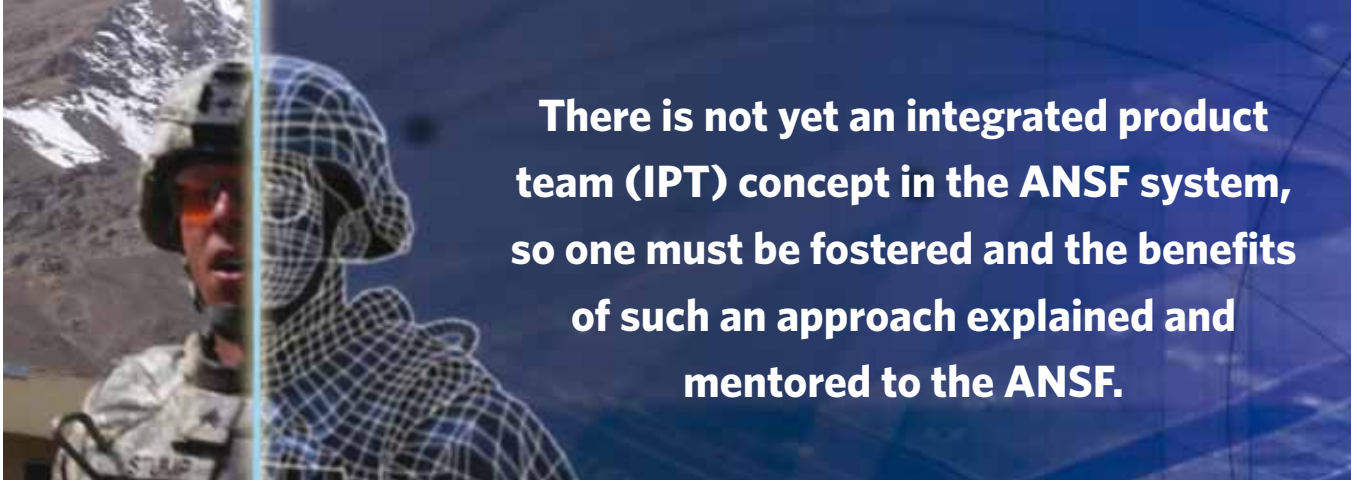
Deployed program management of local acquisitions in Afghanistan presents challenges both similar and dissimilar to those experienced in the United States. One major challenge is requirements generation with Afghanistan National Security Forces (ANSF) and those of the Coalition advisors. This article is the first of two parts that highlights challenges and provides lessons for deployed program managers to use when conducting acquisition programs beyond simple commercial-off-the-shelf commodity procurements with host-nation vendors in a combat environment. A separate article will discuss the challenges of procuring defense items from the Afghanistan vendor base.

Overcoming the requirements generation challenges has been the primary focus of the Security Assistance Office-Afghanistan's (SAO-A's) 15-person Local Acquisitions Office since early 2010. The SAO-A functions under the three-star NATO Training Mission-Afghanistan/Combined Security Transition Command-Afghanistan (NTM-A/CSTC-A), charged with training and equipping the components of the Afghanistan National Security Forces (ANSF). NTM-A/CSTC-A and the three-star International Joint Command (IJC), which conducts counterinsurgency and security operations in concert with the ANSF, are the two major commands under the International Security Assistance Force (ISAF), led at the time by Gen. David H. Petraeus.

Preparation for deployed program management and procurement should start at the home station. Those who will be involved in making local purchases or overseeing service and construction contracts should obtain their Contracting Officer's Representative (COR) certification training prior to deployment. Due to the low Internet bandwidth available at most deployed locations, not to mention the deployed work load, I recommend taking the four online training courses at the home unit. These courses are: CLM 003, *Ethics Training for AT&L Workforce* (or Service equivalent); CLC 106, *COR with a Mission Focus*; CLC 206, *COR in a Contingency Environment*; and *Combating Trafficking in Persons* (CTIP). Three of these courses (CLM 003, CLC 106, and CLC 206) are available at the Defense Acquisition University (DAU) Atlas Pro website (<https://learn.dau.mil/html/login/>

[login.jsp](#)). To sign up for training, click the "I Need Training" link on the left side of the web page, which will direct the applicant to his/her Service training application site to complete the registration process. The CTIP course is normally part of the required pre-deployment training for each Service member.

Those deploying to Afghanistan should read the Afghan First Policy documents that explain the effort to rebuild the Afghan economy and industrial base while contributing to the counterinsurgency (COIN) campaign. A bibliography of these documents can be found at the end of this article, starting with the National Defense Authorization Act for Fiscal Year 2008 (Public Law 110-181), Section 886, "Enhanced Authority to Acquire Products and Services Produced in Iraq and Afghanistan." The premise of the Afghan First Policy is to purchase as much as possible from Afghan companies to support the Afghanistan National Security Forces (ANSF), composed of the Afghanistan National Army (ANA) and the Afghanistan National Police (ANP). A special Title 10 Department of Defense (DoD) appropriation called the Afghanistan Security Forces Fund (ASFF) is used by deployed program managers to purchase commodities and life support, construction, and other services from Afghan-based companies. The ASFF also is used by the SAO-A to procure Major End Items through the foreign military sales process managed by the Defense Security Cooperation Agency (DSCA). For locally procured items, the SAO-A Local Acquisitions Office takes the Afghan First Policy one step further to buy as many prod-



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ucts from Afghan vendors who actually make them. Those are the procurements most challenging to deployed program managers and will be the focus of the remainder of this article.

One of the first challenges the deployed program manager faces is generating requirements, both within the Coalition and with the ANSF leadership. The dynamic security environment leads to many changes in training and fielding plans for the ANSF. The Coalition planned to grow the ANA from 134,000 to 171,000 personnel and grow the ANP by roughly 25,000 personnel by October 2011. This included forming brand new organizations and greatly expanding those approved in 2010, such as the Afghanistan National Civil Order Police (ANCOP), the Afghanistan Public Protection Force (APPF), the Afghanistan Local Police (ALP), and the ANA Commandos. For the SAO-A Local Acquisitions Office (SAO-A/LA), this meant developing new uniforms and outfitting the ANSF units with dozens of Organizational Clothing and Individual Equipment (OCIE) items without the benefit of having clothing, footwear, and other OCIE experts in the deployed office. The ANSF also do not have such experts and neither do they have a materiel command organization comparable to that in the DoD.

Therefore, the SAO-A/LA team reached back to DoD organizations with this expertise in the U.S., such as the Natick Soldier Research Development and Engineering Center (NSRDEC) and Defense Logistics Agency Troop Support Command in Philadelphia (formerly Defense Supply Center-Philadelphia, DSC-P). These organizations supplied the SAO-A/LA team with U.S. government specifications for uniforms, boots, and other OCIE items so that they could be included in solicitations to Afghan industry to have the items made in-country. NSRDEC representatives actually traveled to Afghanistan on two occasions to help the SAO-A/LA team assess the Afghan clothing/textile industry and finalize specifications. Their help was invaluable in helping implement not only Afghan First but actual Afghan Made initiatives.

Another challenge in generating requirements lies in defining them in objective versus subjective terms, and then testing them prior to full-rate production. ANSF personnel typically define quality in subjective terms, such as "high quality" or "durable," or based on where the item is made, such as "Turkish quality" or "Iranian quality," rather than in objec-

tive, measurable terms. These subjective terms are actually part of item nomenclatures in the ANSF logistics inventory management system and incorporated into the culture of the Afghanistan public and industrial base to describe their goods in their commodity price lists. Therefore, obtaining meaningful, measurable requirements from the ANSF for which the items are being developed and procured is very challenging. With the help of Air Force Capt. Phil Bernal, an advisor to the ANP Logistics and Procurement departments, I developed and conducted a basic requirements generation training seminar for 10 ANP item managers in December 2010. However, it will take time to change this subjective standard of measurement in both Afghan government and industry, and show them the life cycle cost benefits of defining and paying for objective, measurable quality.

In addition to difficulty defining requirements in a way they can be measured, there are no national government or commercial standards or testing capabilities for defense-related articles in Afghanistan. The nearest Underwriters Laboratory is in India. Counterfeit goods and components are abundant but not easily distinguished from the actual name brand. Many Afghan vendors claim to be able to supply almost any commodity needed, which calls into question their ability to do any one thing really well or actually make anything in Afghanistan. Therefore, SAO-A/LA sends vendor samples on new contracts to DoD organizations such as DLA or NSRDEC for laboratory testing. For initial operational testing of clothing items, SAO-A/LA coordinates with the Coalition and the ANSF to have some of the ANSF training sites use the items during their basic warrior training courses. This approach has the advantages of the test sites being close to the SAO-A/LA program management team in Kabul, a semi-controlled test environment over several weeks of practical use, inspecting and collecting the test items after training and before fielding, and negating risk to real security operations in case of unexpected product or component use failures, manufacturing defects, or design flaws.

Another challenge for generating requirements involves the high levels of approval required and the corresponding lack of delegation of authority and empowerment in the ANSF leadership. Design decisions that would be made at the one- or two-star level in the DoD (Acquisition Category III or lower)



may have to go the deputy minister of Defense or Interior, or the actual minister, for approval prior to enactment. Thus, adequate staffing time must be built into the development schedule and fielding date expectations managed, especially among the Coalition leadership used to more expedient resolution of such matters in the DoD or NATO nations. It is also a very good idea to identify the approval authorities required on both the ANSF and Coalition sides when a new or improved product is to be developed.

Requirements generation in Afghanistan also presents challenges in obtaining end user (ANSF) input and feedback. Major operational command planning staffs, in which requirements managers reside in the DoD system, don't have a corollary in the ANSF system. Instead, the requirements managers are usually found in the logistics staffs, under the general staff chief of logistics (GSG4) in the Ministry of Defense and the deputy minister for administration and support in the Ministry of Interior, with no direct ties to the actual end users. The ANSF cultural environment also tends to restrain personnel in one chain of command from talking to those in another, even if just for technical interchange discussions at the action officer level. There is not yet an integrated product team (IPT) concept in the ANSF system, so one must be fostered and the benefits of such an approach explained and mentored to the ANSF among the functional areas normally found on such Requirements IPTs in the DoD.

On the NTM-A/CSTC-A side, the Directorate of Logistics (CJ4), ministerial development advisors, and SAO-A/LA, not an operational headquarters element, develop most of the requirements with their ANSF counterparts. SAO-A/LA, as the commodity acquisition program management office, has therefore facilitated such cross-functional discussions among ANSF staffs and actually traveled to meet with ANSF end users to directly obtain their input and feedback on new or improved items under development. Again, such travel and meetings should be factored into requirements development timelines and leadership expectations managed accordingly.

Afghan industrial base constraints and the ANSF perception of them also present challenges for developing requirements. The typical ANSF requirements development process for a new or improved item is to find similar items at the local bazaars and have vendors bring in samples, usually imported, for approval by a small committee. This approach constrains the requirements to those of the available items, thereby jumping to a technical solution without the benefit of first developing the operational concept, strategy to task relationship, functional needs, and non-materiel solution analyses typical of Western requirements development.

There are also no ANSF organizations that do non-materiel solution analyses to see if a materiel development is even required, or to ascertain the impacts of a materiel development, if warranted, on non-materiel facets of the ANSF. In

1. "National Defense Authorization Act for Fiscal Year 2008." (P.L. 110-181), 122 Stat. 266. <http://www.dod.mil/dodgc/olc/docs/pl110-181.pdf>

2. "Acquisitions in Support of Operations in Iraq or Afghanistan." Defense Federal Acquisition Regulation Supplement Pt. 225.77, originally published Sept. 15, 2008, and revised October 1, 2010. [http://www.acq.osd.mil/dpap/dars/dfars/html/current/225\\_77.htm](http://www.acq.osd.mil/dpap/dars/dfars/html/current/225_77.htm)

3. Center for Army Lessons Learned (CALL) Handbook 09-27, "Commander's Guide to Money as a Weapons System", April 2009. <http://usacac.army.mil/cac2/call/docs/09-27/toc.asp>

4. USFOR-A/J8 Publication 1-06, "Money as a Weapon System - Afghanistan," (2010, January). <http://portal.usfora.onetteam.centcom.mil/j8site/Shared%20Documents/Forms/AllItems.aspx?RootFolder=%2fj8site%2fShared%20Documents%2fMAAWS%2dA&FolderCTID=0x012000F72FDED8A36C10478F3D841F26CB318D&View=%7bBEDFC88E%2d085E%2d48B1%2dA5A3%2dE63FD96D3D15%7d>

6. NATO news release (April 23, 2010). NATO Afghan First Policy.

[http://www.nato.int/cps/en/SID-6140CF1C-867D121E/nato-live/official\\_texts\\_62851.htm](http://www.nato.int/cps/en/SID-6140CF1C-867D121E/nato-live/official_texts_62851.htm)

7. CENTCOM Contracting Command Policy Memorandum #10-07 "Definition of an Afghanistan Host Nation Business," (2010, July 8). <http://www.c3-training.net/docs/PM10-07%20Afghani%20Host%20Nation.pdf>

8. Petraeus, D.H. (Sept. 8, 2010). "COMISAF's Counterinsurgency (COIN) Contracting Guidance". Kabul, Afghanistan: Headquarters, International Security Assistance Force.

<http://www.isaf.nato.int/images/stories/File/100908-NUI-COMISAF%20COIN%20GUIDANCE.pdf>

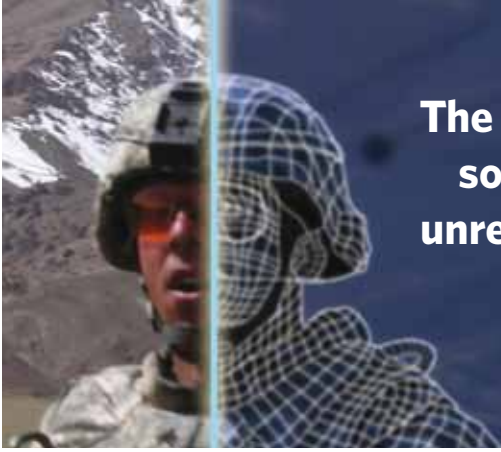
9. U.S. Department of State (Nov. 23, 2010). "U.S. Embassy in Kabul Implements Contracting Oversight in Counterinsurgency (COIN) Strategy". [http://kabul.usembassy.gov/pr\\_112310.html](http://kabul.usembassy.gov/pr_112310.html)

10. CENTCOM Contracting Command Acquisition Instruction (Nov. 5, 2010): <http://www.c3-training.net/docs/C3%20ACQUISITION%20INSTRUCTION.pdf>

Two valuable web resources:

- Peace Dividend Trust: <http://afghanistan.buildingmarkets.org/>
- Afghan First.Org: <http://www.afghanfirst.org/>

the DoD system, the non-materiel solution analysis examines the DOTMLPF, or Doctrine, Organization, Training, [existing] Materiel, Leadership and Education, Personnel, and Facilities potential solutions first before a Materiel Development Decision is made. Non-materiel solution analysis also assesses



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or projects the impacts of that materiel development on the DOTMLPF areas as the requirements evolve and the development progresses. Considering the ANSF's typical subjective definition of requirements described earlier, combined with the lack of non-materiel solution analysis, definition of operational requirements, national standards, and test capabilities, generation of requirements with and within the ANSF is challenging to say the least.

Another challenge in developing requirements with the ANSF is documenting the requirements package and maintaining configuration control over it. In the DoD system, the requirements package from the Joint Capabilities Integration Development System (JCIDS) includes a summary of the operational requirements, non-materiel solutions analyses described above, the potential materiel solutions, and other "cradle to grave" analyses. While such extensive documented analyses are probably not feasible for most local procurements of simple Class IV commodities for the ANSF, such comprehensive analyses and documentation are warranted for development of more complex, high-visibility items. This is especially important for items intended to be locally procured from Afghan vendors to foster creation and expansion of their manufacturing base while properly equipping and outfitting the ANSF. More importantly, mentoring the ANSF to conduct such requirements development and procurements for themselves is extremely important so that they will one day be able to conduct such actions themselves.

Documentation of requirements and decisions made during their development are also crucial to maintain continuity among the ever-changing cast of Coalition personnel whose tours vary from six months to one year in length and whose positions may be filled by those operating outside their normal career field. For example, the SAO-A/LA OCIE Team grew from one to six personnel within the year 2010, with half on six-month tours, all but two having no actual acquisition program management experience or training, and none having any prior experience in OCIE requirements development or program management. Documenting progress and decisions made is vital not only for the PM team's continuity but also for PM team to indoctrinate the ever-changing Coalition advisor and logistics personnel on the overall item development team. While this is also crucial for CONUS-based acquisitions, it is doubly important in the deployed environment.

It is here in the requirements documentation process that the deployed acquisition program manager must beware of the "good idea fairy" (GIF). The GIF is not native to Afghanistan but is usually a well-intentioned Coalition member. The GIF usually wants to get his ANSF partner some new, distinct or improved item, in an unreasonable amount of time, with no funding provided, and/or with little regard for many of the requirements challenges previously outlined. The GIF can also insist that his project be placed above the huge work load already put on the small deployed program management (PM) team by approved projects. New projects or item improvements that bypass the PM team and go straight to Coalition and/or ANSF leadership can result in a re-prioritization of the PM team's work load and funding without due consideration of the entire requirements inputs and outcomes. Similarly, GIF changes to requirements that are not documented and approved by the Coalition and ANSF leadership can cause much consternation and confusion in the PM team, who might be the last to hear about such changes, approved or not, or to have a chance to analyze and support or rebut them.

Therefore, each requirements package should be configuration-controlled by a specific member of the PM team. Requirements team members should be advised up front that only the approved version of the requirements document package will be acted upon by the PM team until the senior leaders in the ANSF and Coalition approval chains direct otherwise.

In summary, a program manager can face many challenges when trying to develop an acquisition program to procure a new or improved product while deployed in Afghanistan. Improper requirements generation can start a program down the wrong path and cost much time and money, both of which are valuable commodities to the small deployed program management team. The deployed PM must work to foster teamwork within the ANSF and Coalition to define requirements in objective, not subjective, terms. Those requirements must be documented for continuity and configuration-managed to prevent unauthorized changes from well-meaning individuals. Once those hurdles are overcome, the PM then faces the daunting challenge of finding Afghan vendors who can actually manufacture the items to the quality defined in those documented requirements. But that is the subject of another article.

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